



*The* **ALL-ALONE  
HOUSE**

RUTH CAMPBELL



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"A LITTLE BOY SAT BY A WINDOW"



# THE ALL-ALONE HOUSE

*By*

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*"That Pink and Blue Affair"*

*"The Runaway Smalls"*

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The All Alone House

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*This book is affectionately dedicated  
to my husband*

*FRANCIS CAMPBELL*

*"The Critic On the Hearth."*

*To whose kindly and scholarly criticisms  
I will owe whatever success may come my way.*



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**THE ALL ALONE HOUSE**







## THE ALL ALONE HOUSE

**A** LITTLE boy sat in a window and looked mournfully at a sign on the front porch. He was a gloomy little boy and disconsolate, and the sign did not make him any happier, for on it in black letters against a red background was the word "Mumps," and the little boy had them. They did not hurt much, but they kept all of his playmates away from him, and made passers-by look at the house a second time.

The people who passed interested the little boy, as he sat with his pathetic face against the glass and watched the street. Some of them looked at the sign and smiled, some of them looked serious, and once in a while a very fussy looking woman

would cross to the other side of the street, pulling her children after her and sniffing scornfully at the sign. Two or three women had jumped when they saw the sign, as if it was going to climb down and "Boo" at them.

"Colin!" called the little boy's mother, "what are you doing?"

"Nothing much, just thinking," answered Colin. "Mother, do you suppose I will ever get over the mumps and play out with my chums again?"

There was a wobble in his voice that brought his mother to his side. "Poor little chap," she said. "Time does drag, doesn't it? But you won't have to stay in much longer, and I have a wonderful secret to tell you that will make the days pass much quicker."

Now Colin knew that the very best way to hear a secret was to climb on his mother's lap and cuddle down, which he did now, and when he was all comfy with her arms about him she told him the wonderful secret.

"We are going to Grandmother's for the summer."

Colin sat straight up. "We are!" he cried. "For all summer? Oh, Mother, it is just too good to be true. Are you going, and Daddy?"

"We are going to take you," his mother answered, "but we are not going to stay."

"Why not? I'll be unhappy without you," Colin said.

"Daddy can't be away from his business, and you know we can't leave him here all alone for the whole summer. You will love it at Grandmother's and you won't miss me at all. Grandmother will adore you, and I am afraid she will spoil you too, but it won't hurt you any."

"I don't remember much about Grandmother, or where she

lives," Colin said. "I must have been very little when I was there before."

"You were," answered his mother.

"Tell me about it all," Colin begged. He loved to hear stories of his grandmother and his little cousins and the fun they all had together, and although his mother had told him the same stories dozens of times he never tired of them.

"Well," his mother went on, "there is the Big House. That is where Grandmother lives, and where I lived when I was a little girl."

"Did you have any brothers or sisters?" Colin asked. He very well knew all about the brothers and sisters but he wanted to hear again. "And did they have children?"

His mother laughed. "You rascal! Do you want to hear about them again? Yes, I had many brothers and sisters and now they are all grown up and have children like you, and they are all your first cousins. There are Buster and Elizabeth Anne. Buster is twelve and his little sister is six. And then there is Tommie. Tommie is a scamp."

Colin giggled. "I love to hear about the time he fell in the rain barrel," he said.

"And there are Marcia and Cara; they are sisters and Marcia is your age (Colin was nine) and Cara is five, a year younger than Elizabeth Anne. Then there is one more, Kenneth. He is just fine and because he has no brothers or sisters he has to be sweet enough and good enough for a whole family."

"Is he?" asked Colin.

"Yes, he is a dear. I remember one time his father fell and broke his leg. Kenneth was all alone in the house and he called a doctor right away and 'phoned Grandmother, and helped his father to bed like a regular little man. We were



all so proud of him, and he took the very best care in the world of his father after that. He ran errands and waited on him and was so cheerful that his father just could not be unhappy."

"And he got a present for that," said Colin, who knew the story, "a darling doggie named 'Sandy,' and now Kenneth and Sandy play together all of the time, with all of the little cousins. That makes nine playmates."

"Only six cousins," his mother said.

"I was counting them all," Colin told her. "Six cousins and three dogs, and when I go there will be ten of us. Will we play together every day, Mother?"

"I think you will," was the answer. "The children all adore their grandmother, and she loves to have them around her, so every day during vacation they go to the Big House. It is such a wonderful place!"

"Don't you ever miss it, Mother dear?" asked Colin.

"I have never stopped missing it," his mother said. There was a suggestion of tears in her voice that made Colin put his arms around her neck.

"Never mind, Mother," he said. "We couldn't live there and here too, and Daddy lives here."

His mother gave him a little hug. "You're a precious, understanding little boy," she said. "Of course we want to live here with Daddy."

"But we will be glad always to visit at Grandmother's, won't we?" Colin finished.

The days went by more quickly after that. Colin spent hours getting his things together for the summer. He sorted out his toys and put away the smallest in a box for the summer "for rainy days," he told his mother. He wrote letters to all

of the cousins to tell them he was coming, and had answers from every one, even Cara. Hers was such a scrawly little letter that Colin laughed and laughed over it.

"Deer colin," it read. "i am glad you are comeing i have a dog have you we will play lots. i love you Cara."

"Her dog's name is 'Pat,'" said Colin. "I know because you have told me stories about him, and how Cara's father takes him hunting."

Before Colin knew it, he was well. The doctor said he could play out and a nice man came and took the red and black sign down from the porch. After that the days passed even more quickly and then one day his mother said it was time to begin getting their things in a trunk. Colin put his clothes in a big trunk with his mother's and every day got more and more excited.

Each morning he would sing at the top of his voice, "Only five more days!" then "Only four more days!" then "Only three more days!" and at last there was only one more day and everything was packed.

Colin was too excited to eat and that last night at home he simply could not get to sleep.

"The boy will be sick with so much excitement," his mother said.

But his father laughed and said, "It's good healthy excitement and won't hurt him a bit."

For an hour before they left for the station Colin hopped around getting dreadfully in the way. He lost his hat and worried about the lunch. Had Cook put in enough cakes? Were there oranges and could he have cookies, too?

"Colin! you're a nuisance," his mother finally said. "Go and sit with your father so that I can finish, or we never will



get started." So Colin sat with his father and asked enough questions to drive a grown-up crazy.

But at last it was time to leave. Colin turned to look at the house as they drove away.

"It looks like an All Alone House," he said. "The windows are like eyes half closed with the shades down that way. They look like eyes that are going to cry; it all seems unhappy."

His mother sighed ever so little. "I'm afraid it will be an 'All Alone House' this summer," she answered. "I shall miss my little boy very much and the house will miss him too, I'm sure. No shouting, no laughing, and no noise."

"And no disorder," his father laughed.

When they reached the station they got right on the train, because Daddy had the tickets.

"I'd like some lunch," said Colin. But his mother told him he would have to wait.

It seemed hours before the train pulled out. "Is the engine all right? Are we going? Is it almost time? Will we be late?" he asked.

It took all day to get to the little town where his grandmother lived, and Colin was a tired little traveler long before they arrived, but he was good. For a long time he looked out of the window. How queer the outside behaved. The trees went marching around in great wide circles. That is, the trees way off did. Those closer to the track hurried by, but they didn't race as the telegraph poles did.

There were horses in fields, and cows. The cows did not even bother to look at the train, but almost always the horses threw up their heads and galloped across the field. Once a collie dog ran out from a farmhouse and raced along by the train. For a little while he kept up, running with his body

close to the ground, his tongue hanging out, and what was very like a smile on his doggie face. Colin felt like cheering and was sorry when he fell behind.

Near one station where the train stopped was a pen of sheep. They all looked alike and did not seem much bothered at being packed in so tight together.

"I'd like a lamb to play with," Colin said.

"Perhaps your grandmother will get you one," his mother said. "We always had pets, dozens of them. I remember once I had a red fox; he was quite tame and I used to keep him chained to a little house like a dog kennel. One night he got away and killed five chickens, and the next week when he came back for more, Henry shot him."

"Where is Henry now?" asked Colin.

"He still drives for Grandmother, but he is getting old."

"Will I like Henry?" asked Colin.

"You will if you are good," answered his mother. "But Henry gets awfully cross about mischief. We used to get into plenty of it when I was little and sometimes Henry would not let us play in the barns."

At one station a woman got in with a little red dog in her arms. Colin looked longingly at the dog and finally the woman smiled at him.

"Would you like to pet the dog?" she asked.

Colin smiled back. "If he isn't growlish."

The woman laughed. "He isn't growlish," she said, and for almost an hour Colin played with the friendly little dog.

But before the end of the journey was reached a tired little boy cuddled up in his mother's arms, where he lay contentedly with his head on her shoulder.

"Are we almost there?" he asked.

“Almost,” his mother told him.

Suddenly his father stood up. “The next station,” he said, and began getting things together.

Colin forgot that he was tired. He straightened up and found his hat and coat. He forgot the lunch-that-was-left and the funny paper his daddy had bought. He forgot the new book his mother had given him as a train surprise. His little face grew shiny with happiness and the sparkle in his eyes made his daddy’s eyes sparkle too. He smiled happily at his mother.

“I’m going to look out of the window until the train stops,” he said. “Maybe all of my cousins will be there to meet me.”

His mother looked serious. She realized suddenly that if the little cousins were not there, Colin’s heart would be broken.

“Don’t be surprised if they are not,” she warned him. “I really think Grandmother will not bring them all.”

“Won’t anybody meet me?” Colin whispered with his lips quivering.

“Of course Grandmother will be there,” his mother said.

The train began to slow down. Colin’s face was pressed tight against the window.

“Oh, Mother,” he cried, “they aren’t!” and his voice shook. It seemed to him as if he could not keep the tears back as he followed his father to the door. Not a little cousin in sight, and he had counted so much on seeing them all there.

A man stepped forward to take their bags. He spoke to Colin’s mother. “Miss Joan, I’m glad you are back. It has been a long time, Miss Joan.”

Colin could see that the man liked his mother very much indeed and wondered who he was when the man turned to him.





“ But where are the cousins ? ”

“And you are Colin.”

“Yes,” said Colin, “and who are you?”

“I’m Roy,” said the man.

“Oh! I know all about you,” Colin replied. “But where are the cousins?”

“That is a surprise,” answered Roy. “You’ll have to ask your grandmother. She is in the carriage.”

Colin ran around the funny little station and there in a carriage sat his grandmother. Colin did not remember how dear she was or what a sweet smile she had.

“You precious lad,” she called and held out her arms.

Colin climbed into the carriage and threw his arms about her neck. For a minute Grandmother could not speak and then she said:

“Are you dreadfully disappointed not to find the children here? I just would not let them come. I wanted you all to myself this first half hour, and then I will give you to your cousins and probably see you only at meals and bedtimes the rest of the summer.”

“Where are the cousins?” asked Colin. He was beginning to feel happier now that he knew they had not forgotten him.

Grandmother smiled. “That is a secret,” she said.

Then his mother and father came and there was a lot of hugging and kissing and talking, but finally they were in the carriage and the bags were in and Roy was up in front with Henry, and the horses were trotting briskly toward home.

Colin sat very close to his grandmother. “Will I see the cousins this evening?” he whispered to her.

“As soon as we reach home,” she whispered back.

In front of a beautiful big house Henry spoke to the horses



and they slowed down to a walk. Colin was staring at the house and the wonderful lawns. To his city eyes it seemed like a park.

"Is this your house?" he asked his grandmother.

"Yes, dear, and yours too for the whole summer," she answered.

"I don't see any children," Colin said plaintively.

"Impatient One!" laughed his grandmother. "It is a surprise. They are all in the hall waiting for you."

Colin jumped down from the carriage when Henry stopped the horses by the great horse block and raced to the front doors. He pushed one of them open and stepped in.

There in a solemn row stood six figures. They all had legs and feet, but in place of arms and heads they had great paper sacks with funny faces painted on them.

Colin gasped. "Are you my cousins?" he asked.

The six little figures bobbed their heads, but no one spoke.

"You must name them all," said his grandmother behind him, "and when you get the right name the bag will burst, and out will come your cousin."

Colin dashed to the littlest figure. "I know you! You are Elizabeth Anne," he shouted.

The paper head shook slowly from side to side.

"Then you are Cara," he cried excitedly, and the bag burst and a darling little girl with yellow hair and dimples threw her arms around his neck.

"Try another," she cried.

Colin marched to one of the big ones. "I think you are Kenneth," he said, and that bag burst too, and a boy with the friendliest smile in the world put out his hand and said, "Hello, Colin."

They shook hands like two men and Colin turned to another sack.

"You're Tommie," he said.

The head turned from side to side.

"Then you are Buster," Colin went on.

But the bag did not burst.

"You HAVE to be one or the other," Colin cried, "there aren't any more boys."

"Try a girl's name," suggested Grandmother.

"But it is wearing boy's knickers," protested Colin.

"Never mind that," laughed Grandmother.

So Colin said "Marcia" and the bag burst to let out a very smiling Marcia.

"I put on boy's clothes to fool you," she said.

The cousins were all guessed and had all broken out of their paper sacks and then Grandmother said:

"Now I have a little surprise. You are all going to stay for supper to celebrate Colin's coming, and afterward we are going to play games until nine o'clock."

"Oh, Grandmother," they all cried together, "you are a dear."

That was the happiest evening Colin had ever known. It was wonderful to be with so many joyful children and have them all in his very own family. He had had a rather lonely childhood and although he had many playmates, as he said to his mother, "Not one of them really belongs to me."

At nine o'clock a radiant but tired little boy said good-night to his cousins. He kissed and hugged them all and made them promise to come to the Big House the very first thing in the morning, and when the door closed on their pleasant voices he turned to his mother.

"I never knew it was going to be so wonderful," he cried happily. But suddenly he felt tired, and creeping into his mother's arms realized that in spite of the happiness ahead of him, he was going to miss his mother and that she would be lonely without him.

"I don't like to have you go back to the All Alone House and stay the whole summer without me," he whispered. There were tears in his eyes, although he really was happy.

"Of course it will be lonely without you, dear," his mother said; "but if you miss me too much I'll come up to see you, and if our house is too all-alonish, you can come home for a little visit."

That was like his mother, not to spoil his happiness, Colin thought, and it was like her to think of him more than herself.

"But now that I can write, I'll send you a letter every week," he said, "and I will fill it with hugs and kisses."

"You might begin now by kissing us all good-night," said his mother, and when he had hugged and kissed them all she led him away to bed and tucked him in to dream of the little cousins and the wonderful summer ahead of him.



## POTS OF PAINT







## POTS OF PAINT

**D**OWN in the willow grove a small boy busied himself with three interesting looking pails. Dented they were, with splotches of colored paint on their sides. The little boy stirred busily at one and suddenly splashed a great blot of green paint on his hand. This he wiped off on his knickers and straightway forgetting all about it, rubbed his hand over his face. A long green streak appeared on his fore-

head and the little boy settled down to his stirring. There Marcia found him.

"What EVER are you doing, Colin?" she cried.

"Hush! Can't you? Don't shout so loud."

"Why?" persisted Marcia. "What EVER is on your face and what is in the pail?"

"Paint," answered Colin; and remembering something he had heard his father say, he went on, "And it has great possibilities."

"What are possibilities?" Marcia wanted to know.

"They are what's in the paint," Colin enlightened her.

"Whose paint is it?" Marcia asked.

"It is mine now, but it is going to be yours, and Tommie's, and Cara's, and Kenneth's, and Buster's, and Elizabeth Anne's, and everybody's." Colin waved a generous hand.

"Perhaps I'd better get them all," suggested Marcia.

"I was thinking about that," Colin answered and settled down again to his stirring.

Marcia disappeared through the closely woven branches down the little secret path the children had made, and Colin heard her give the call of "coo-oo, coo-ee" as she trotted up the hill beyond.

Like little Indians the children began to gather in the willow grove, Kenneth and Buster squirming through the tall grass on their stomachs; not because it was any easier, but it was the proper way to approach. Indians did it that way, and long ago they had decided when they went to the willow grove they were Indians. Little white boys they might be until the shelter of that woody place was reached, and then quite by magic they were turned into red men.

Buster did not stop to ask any questions. He looked at





There Marcia found him

the streak of green paint on Colin's face (by this time there was a lovely spot of yellow, too,) and breaking off a willow twig he peeled it and began stirring in another pail.

"Who gave us the paint?" Kenneth asked. The children never spoke of one of them alone; they never said "You" or "Me" but always "Us."

"Well," said Colin honestly, "it wasn't exactly given us, it was more lent. I kind of borrowed it."

"Like Mr. Crow borrows things," suggested Marcia.

"No, not just that," Colin said hesitatingly. "You see, Mr. Crow does not intend to return things, and we are going to return this, in a way."

"Are we? How?" Tommie wanted to know. Colin stopped stirring.

"It is this way," he told the interested group. "You see, Grandmother bought quite a lot of paint. She is going to have the porch floors painted, and some furniture, and some things in the cellar, and I heard her say when the men brought the pails that she knew there was too much. So I borrowed three pails, one of each color."

"Borrowed things have to be returned," said Marcia in a good-little-girl-voice, "and how can you return it if you use it all up? You've spent all of your allowance and you lost ten cents of Tommie's that you have to pay back, so you can't buy more."

Colin looked up with his sweetest smile.

"That," he said, "is all decided. We are going to return the paint in a sort of surprise way. We are going to do some painting for Grandmother."

"Oh!" the children cried together. "When can we begin?"



“Right now,” Colin told them.

“What shall we paint?” they wanted to know, and Kenneth said:

“There is no use painting the things the men are hired to paint. Men are always so cross when they are interfered with. Let’s paint away from the house where we won’t be disturbed until we have finished.”

Cara, who was younger, was quite impressed.

“Yes,” she echoed. “Let’s not be dis-tur-bed. Let’s not be in-ter-fer-ed with.”

“We need brushes,” Buster announced.

“They are in the treasure chest,” Colin told him briefly.

The treasure chest was an old wood stove. The top was filled with holes, but the children had nailed bits of tin over those and the door, which was without hinges, was tied on with what Kenneth claimed was the **STOUTEST** cord.

Kenneth untied the door and reached in. He felt around with a perplexed expression on his face which changed to a wide grin as he drew forth a bundle.

“How ever did you get so many?” he asked.

“I borrowed all of those we would need,” said Colin, “because they are so easily returned.”

“Is the paint all stirred?” Tommie asked. “I’d like to stir.”

“Get a stick,” Colin said.

Tommie got a stick. He poked happily into the pot of red paint, wound it up like a watch and looked importantly at the girls.

“This is a man’s job,” he announced.

That gave Marcia an idea.

"Aren't we going to paint too? You boys can't have all the fun."

"Of course you are going to paint," Colin told her. "We'll need you, because when we get started we'll have to hurry. I mean we will have to finish before we are . . . before we are . . ."

"In-ter-fer-ed with," suggested Cara.

"Well," Colin admitted, "perhaps it is that. Grown up people don't always understand, and anyway I'd like to have the surprise finished before we tell them about it."

"Yes, finished," Marcia repeated. "Mother always said to finish everything we began."

"We will this," Colin assured her.

The paint was ready, the children lined up according to age, and the brushes were given out. Colin, who knew his littlest cousin, and feared a howl of protest when he gave her the smallest, brought a smile to her face by saying:

"It looks like the smallest brush, but it is the most important, because it is for the eyes."

Elizabeth Anne dimpled, "Am I going to paint the eyes?" she cried, and did a little dance.

"Look out!" shrieked Tommie. "There now, you HAVE gone and done it," for one dancing foot had struck the pot of paint. There was a cry from Elizabeth Anne as her slipper filled with green paint, and a shout from the boys who dived at the overturned pail and straightened it. Elizabeth Anne burst into tears.

"Don't howl," Kenneth told her. "We saved the paint anyway."

"My slipper is spoiled," wept Elizabeth Anne.

"We'll all look worse than that when we have finished,"

Marcia said truthfully. "It is only one slipper anyway, so don't worry."

"Let's go," announced Colin, and Indian fashion they all filed out of the grove.

For reasons best known to themselves the children gave the house a wide berth. Of course there was always Huldah who would see things not meant for her to see, and there was the old gardener, Roy, who had an annoying way of asking questions. More than once he had spoiled well-laid plans, for he was a dreadful sort of grown-up with a stupid way of not understanding or approving. And also there was darling Grandmother. The surprise was for her, so of course it would not be right to have her know about it before it was done.

"The clover field will be the best way," Colin announced. He had taken command of the affair, and his leadership was not questioned by the rest, who felt that his easy acquiring of the paint allowed him the privilege of directing the secret plan.

"Then where?" Marcia asked.

"The barns," Colin answered, and the children gave little gasps of pleasure. The barns passed their greatest hopes. They offered such unlimited possibilities for pots of paint. They were so much bigger than furniture, and so much more important than fruit cellars or porches. Also the man would not be there now. He would be at the house helping Huldah with the rugs, or the painters with the furniture. It did not much matter what he would be doing as long as he was out of the way.

"Are we going to paint the barns?" asked Tommie.

"Not all of them," Colin answered.

"I should say not," Kenneth finished. "Why, there are three of them; for the horses, and carriages, and the cows.



Gracious! that would take us JUST ages; we'd never get through."

"Anyway, they don't need painting, all of 'em," Tommie went on. "Say, Colin, what are we going to do?"

But Colin marched on importantly until the shelter of the carriage barn had been reached. There he put his pot of paint on the ground, and faced the rest.

"I've always thought the walls of these barns were terribly bare," he told them. "White brick is such a 'homebly' color."

"It hasn't any expression," Marcia said thoughtfully. "It is like Aunt Sally when she doesn't want you to know what she is thinking."

"It looks like castor oil to me," Tommie said.

"Oh, don't!" the rest cried together, and Kenneth looked crossly at him and said:

"You KNOW we never mention castor oil or spankings, Tommie. You mustn't."

"I forgot," said Tommie apologetically.

"Let's forget that and get on with the painting," Buster said. "Where will we begin?"

"At the bottom," Tommie suggested, but Colin interrupted.

"No, the walls don't need to be covered. It will be more interesting to do pictures, and Grandmother will be more surprised. I've been thinking about the pictures and I think it would be nice to have them connected; not just little separate things, but something that will run around the barn and meet itself coming back and look as if it should meet itself." Here he waited a minute to let the full beauty of his thought sink in with his delighted audience, and then went on impressively, "And what I have decided to do is Indians."

The gasp of surprise that greeted this was all and more than Colin had expected.

"They are going to be tall, very tall," he announced. "We'll have to do the heads with a ladder, and some are going to have war bonnets."

"What kind of bonnets are those?" Cara asked.

"With feathers in them and hanging down," Kenneth answered. "I know how to draw them."

"The feathers will be green and yellow," Colin decided, "and the Indians red."

"All red?" Marcia wanted to know. "We won't have enough paint."

"We'll just draw the outsides, and then there'll be plenty of red paint, and we can make their tommy-hawks yellow and their shoes green," Colin told her.

"Indians don't wear shoes," Buster said.

"These will have to, and we can play they've been walking in the grass and got stained like I grass-stained my white suit, and make their feet green. THAT will save red."

"I'll get a ladder," said Tommie.

"Splendid!" cried the children, and set to work.

The long summer afternoon wore on. The sun beat down and the children grew hot and tired. But still they worked like little beavers, grunting and painting, stopping only when some hitherto undiscovered talent came to light. There was one full halt in the work when Buster, on the top of the ladder, drew a wonderful war bonnet with very real looking feathers growing out of it, and wampum beads covering the head band. The children gathered below in an admiring group.

"It's simply beautiful," breathed Cara. And Marcia, quite overcome, said:

"It's perfect. Now if you can only draw a face as good."

"I can," boasted Buster proudly, and straightway did it.

"Oh!" cried Colin. "Won't Grandmother be surprised?"

The pictures grew and grew, the circle grew and grew, and the Indians danced in delightful procession around the white brick walls. Also the splotches of paint on the children grew and grew.

"You look so funny with that yellow paint in your brown hair," Buster told Marcia.

"And you look funny with your nose all green and your ear red," Marcia answered. "Anyway, you dropped the yellow paint on my head."

"You're nothing compared with me," said Colin. "My suit is covered."

"And my shoes are full," Cara cried.

"Hurry up! we're almost through," interrupted Buster. "We're all covered anyway; what else could we expect?"

It was five o'clock when the last Indian danced up behind the first one and the children stood back to get the full effect of their hard work. It was certainly marvelous, quite stupendous, and more showy than they had dared to hope.

They sat in a painty little row on a grassy bank and looked proudly at their Indians. War bonnets, feathers, tomahawks, moccasins, belts, hatchets, blankets and bows and arrows. How beautifully complete it all was.

"I never thought we could do it," Colin whispered in a tired little voice.

"It does seem an awful lot," Buster answered.

"We kept right at it," Marcia explained. And the proud



little row sat in dreamy contemplation of the afternoon's work, admiring the splendid Indians on the highly artistic walls. No one spoke and no one moved.

It was Roy who broke in on their reverie. He came from the house with his eyes fastened on the richly decorated barn. There was an astonished expression on his face. He looked as if he could not believe something, and yet as if he did believe it after all. As he neared the barn he began to run, still looking at the walls. Suddenly he fell over a stone. The children were watching him.

"It was as big as a trunk," Colin said contemptuously. "He should have seen it. Now he'll be awfully cross."

But Roy got up as if he had not noticed the stone. He did not stop to brush himself off. His eyes were still glued to the barn. The children could hear him talking to himself in queer little jerky sentences. Now they could understand his words.

"It warn't that-a-way this morning," he was muttering. "Them Indians wasn't in sight this noon. The whole thing's covered . . . red . . . green . . . and yella . . . Gosh!"

He stood in front of the children staring at the barn, his eyes perfectly round with amazement. The children did not move or speak. They were enjoying in a tired way this tribute to their work.

"It's wonderful," Roy said at last.

"Yes, isn't it?" Colin answered him, and Roy turned; his astonished gaze took in the painty group. He looked at the brushes in their hands, at the empty pots of paint at their feet. His eyes went back to the barn and suddenly light broke in upon him.

"Did you do that?" he gasped, waving an arm at the Indians.

"Yes," Buster answered, "and it was hard work too."

Roy took off his hat and wiped his forehead with the back of his hand.

"It must have been," he agreed.

"We had just enough paint," Colin assured him.

"I'll say you had too much," Roy answered, and still stared at the walls.

"What do you think of it?" Marcia asked.

"I ain't thinkin'," Roy answered. "I can't. Has your grandmother saw it yit?"

"No," Colin told him. "It is to surprise her."

"It will," Roy agreed briefly.

"Well, what do you think?" Marcia insisted. "You must be thinking something. You can't just stand there *not* thinking. People are always thinking SOMETHING."

Roy turned. His eyes took in the entire painty row; then he looked at each child quite steadily. They began to feel uneasy.

"Oh!" said Colin crossly, "say something. Don't just stand and stare like that."

"Well," said Roy slowly. "You wanted to know what I thought. What I thought and am still thinkin' is, I'm glad I ain't you," and he went on into the barn.

"That was a funny thing to say," Buster remarked. "It did not sound encouraging."

"No," echoed Cara, "it did not sound en-cour-a-ging."

Marcia stood up. "I think I'll be going home," she announced. "There may be something I can do to help Mother." And Buster stood up with her.

"I promised to carry in some birch wood for the grate," he said. "I'd better be going too."

Cara took Marcia's hand. "I want to pick up my toys," she said, and Kenneth started off brushing at the paint on his knickers.

"I wish I'd been more careful of my clothes," he stated to no one in particular.

The brushes lay on the ground forgotten, the empty pots of paint rolled down the bank, and the now serious children moved away. It was Colin who broke the silence.

"Well, s'long! See you in the morning."

"Maybe," said Marcia. She had a sense of impending trouble.

"I dunno," said Buster. He too had the same feeling. They went on silently to the driveway where they stood for a minute.

"Well, s'long!" Colin said again. He didn't know what else to say.

"S'long!" the others answered and he stood watching the paint smeared little figures as they trudged down the road and out of sight.

In the library of the Big House the Grown-ups sat. In Grandmother's bedroom a quiet, frightened group of Small Persons waited like prisoners in court to hear their sentence. The Grown-ups had been a long time in the library. It seemed weeks to the children since the doors had closed on their serious faces and the hum of talk without words had begun to drift back to the bedroom prison. And it seemed years since the Indians had been painted on the white barn walls. Only two days before, and what dreadful days. Roy had told Huldah,



and Huldah had told Grandmother. But in the light of things that followed the children could not blame Roy or Huldah.

"We wanted Grandmother to know," Colin said honestly. "So we can't blame them for telling."

"They might have let us tell," protested Marcia. "It was our surprise for Grandmother."

"Well," remarked Buster, "Grandmother knows, and so do our aunts and uncles and fathers and mothers and ALL of our relations, and everybody in this old town, I guess. So it does not matter who told or how they found out."

"And anyway," said Colin with a reminiscent look in his eyes, "we are in trouble enough without having Roy and Huldah mad at us."

"Yes," agreed the others, "we are."

The hum of voices from the library went on and on. The children grew more serious. Elizabeth Anne put out a paint covered slipper. Suddenly she began to cry.

"Oh, don't!" Kenneth said with a kind of rough sympathy. "Don't let's get crying. We may as well be brave about it."

"Mother says I've got to wear it until the paint wears off," Elizabeth Anne sobbed.

"You can rub it on the cement walk," Marcia told her and they were all silent again.

After a long time the door to the bedroom opened. It was Colin's father who had come the night before. Colin could not understand what dreadful coincidence had brought him at this time.

"We are ready for you children now," was all he said; and they filed reluctantly into the library.

Not a word from the Grown-ups. The children found seats and waited. This was worse than they had feared. The

naughty little painters hung their heads and still no word from the Grown-ups. Minutes passed. The clock on the mantel ticked on and on. Buster found a funny little thought running through his head in time to the ticks "Bad-boy . . . Bad-boy . . . Bad-boy," the clock seemed almost to be saying the words. He wondered if the others heard it. Finally Colin looked up. His father was watching him with a grave expression. Colin looked at his grandmother. She met his eyes with eyes that weren't angry. Colin couldn't understand. He looked at her mouth and suddenly he *did* understand. Grandmother wasn't angry. She did not look cross; she looked sad, dreadfully sad. She was disappointed in him. He had been naughty and had made the others naughty, too. He had borrowed things that could not be returned, he had wasted paint and spoiled the beautiful white walls of the barn, and still his darling Grandmother was not angry. She was just sad and hurt and kind. Oh! so kind. A great big lump came into his throat. His heart ached and ached and his eyes were blinded with tears. He launched himself at his grandmother and flung himself on her breast.

"Grandmother! I'm sorry! I'm sorry! Please forgive me. I love you such lots and I've made you unhappy. Please punish me, but don't look at me with that awful hurt in your eyes. Oh, Grandmother dear!"

The tender arms closed about him. He buried his face in the dear neck and cried on and on. The other children cried silently and still no word was spoken by the Grown-ups. Colin's sobs grew less violent, but his arms around his grandmother's neck did not loosen their hold. Finally he whispered:

"I won't mind being punished if you'll only forgive me."

"Dear little boy," his grandmother answered, "I have for-



given you, and you've had punishment enough." Colin raised his tear-stained face to hers and saw her nod at the others, and then buried his face in her neck again. After a long time he looked up once more. There was no one in the room but his grandmother and his father. He slid from his grandmother's lap and walked with determined little steps to his father.

"I'm ready for that spanking," he said courageously.

"Your grandmother does not want you spanked or punished at all," his father told him, and his grandmother went on:

"My little boy is not going to be naughty again I know. There is a long happy summer ahead of you if you are good, but if you are going to do naughty things you will have to go back to your home. Away from the Big House, away from your cousins and playmates, away from the beautiful lake and all the things you love."

"And you too?" Colin asked.

"And me," his grandmother answered.

A little boy sat in the willow grove and called "Coo-oo, Coo-ee." Presently three squirming figures made their way through the long grass. Not long after Marcia crept in followed by Cara, and then Elizabeth Anne appeared. They all sat cross-legged in a ring and for a long time said nothing. Finally Buster spoke.

"Let's put that paint day with the castor oil and spankings."

"And never mention them," Tommie finished.

Colin's face flushed. "I'm so ashamed," he said honestly.

"I'd be ashamed not to be ashamed," Marcia said.

The golden rays of the afternoon sun shone through the

willow branches, making queer prancing shadows around the children, and flickering golden lights danced on their little heads and faces. After all it was a beautiful world. The wonderful summer lay ahead of them; there were going to be good and happy and the Grown-ups weren't going to be ashamed of them again. They had been forgiven and were enjoying the peace that forgiveness brings, and quite silently they sat in a contented little circle with the warm bright rays of the sun dancing about them.



## THE REBELLION OF REX







## THE REBELLION OF REX

A PICTURE in a magazine started it. The picture was of a happy little boy and girl, each sitting proudly in a cart drawn by a happy eager dog.

"Very waggish and smilish," Elizabeth Anne said.

The children were fascinated by the pictures, and the story too. It seemed a shame they did not have a dog-horse to pull them about.

"Let's harness Rex," Kenneth suggested. "He's big enough to pull us all."

"He's too lazy," said Buster. "He won't do a thing but plant himself down in the middle of the road and pant and not budge. And he's too big to push."

Rex was. He was the handsomest son of a gentle mama

Mastiff and a big papa St. Bernard, and he had inherited from his father a wonderfully sweet disposition, and from his mother a size that made him quite the thing for a lion in a circus, or a pretend elephant. But his possibilities as a horse had never occurred to the children until they saw the pictures in the magazine that came once a month to Marcia and Cara.

"We might try anyway," said Marcia.

Tommie got up. "I know where there is some stout cord," he said.

"Cord won't do," Buster told him. "Let's have a really harness. There are plenty of straps in the barn that Henry will let us have, and we can cut them to fit and get Grandmother to give us big needles to sew them together."

"We never can. Leather is dreadfully tough. We'd prick our hands so they'd hurt for a week," Marcia said.

"Well then, we'll punch holes with the harness punch and tie them together. Get the cord, Tommy. I'll ask Henry," Buster said.

Henry was the old coachman who had been working for Grandmother for years and years, ever since the parents of the cousins were as small as the cousins themselves. He had seen several crowds of small persons come and go, and he knew just what damage they could do to a nice tidy barn, if they were allowed free rein in their play.

Kenneth got up. "Perhaps two of us had better ask Henry," he suggested. "The last time I went to the barn alone, he wasn't so glad to see me. Somebody had left the door open and the horses got in with the bran sacks and they were all swollen and sick for two days. Henry had to get the doctor, and he said all of the horses might have died."

"But they didn't," said Elizabeth Anne. "So what's the



use of worrying about that? Anyway, the old horses must have pushed the door open; they must have smelled the bran and pushed the door open all by themselves. We can't be blamed for everything, can we? "

"No," said the others.

"But we are," Kenneth remarked philosophically.

"Most everything," admitted the others in resigned voices.

Henry was in the friendliest frame of mind. Sure he'd get some straps for the children. Yes, they could use the harness punch if they'd return it, and he'd help them cut the straps the right length. The children were delighted. It was an unheard of thing to get help from Henry. They never hoped to get more than his permission, but he was strangely interested this time and kindly. The children never did understand it and talked it over many times after.

"He helped us right to the end," Elizabeth Anne said, "until the harness was finished."

"He's interested in harnesses. It was the first time we were interested in the same thing," was the way Kenneth reasoned it out.

"Well, haven't we always been interested in the barn and the horses and everything down there?" Tommie wanted to know.

"Not exactly the same way," Colin said truthfully. "This way we're making something together."

"And the other way we were just making trouble," finished Marcia, and there did not seem to be anything more to be said.

Grandmother laughed when they told her Rex was going to be a horse. "He's been everything else," she said, "and he may as well be a horse now. But don't impose upon him. He

is so good-natured that you children are inclined to ask too much of him."

The harness was finished. It fitted like a regular store-made harness. There was a strap to go over his head and long tugs to fasten to the cart. There was a sort of bridle, more a halter, because Rex just would not have bits in his mouth. And there was a band around his body; not because it was needed, but because real harness had bands to go around bodies.

Rex was resigned. He knew down in his doggie heart that it would not last long, and he loved the children too well to refuse to play horse with them.

"We can have Pat and Sandy for colts," Cara suggested.

Pat looked sad. He was a sad-faced hound anyway. His natural expression bespoke the greatest woe. His outlook on life was a dreary one, and the only time he showed any interest or enthusiasm was when the children roused him from a deep sleep by shouting, "Rabbits! Pat! Rabbits! Sic 'em!" Then he would spring to his feet with a wagging tail and burst into a long joyous howl. But when he found that he had been deceived and that there were no rabbits, his face would sink back into its usual long-lined depression and his tail would droop dejectedly and his eyes would fill with a pathetic sadness.

"He can be tied on one side and Sandy on the other," the children decided.

But Sandy rebelled. He wouldn't be tied to the side of anything. He flattened out on his stomach and put his face on his paws and looked at the children with resentful eyes. Sandy was an Airedale, all bristly like a porcupine. He loved racing with the children and would chase sticks as long as they would throw them. He would sit up and jump through a hoop and do other tricks, and he was always in great demand

as a clown when the children had a circus. But now he just would not be tied to the cart and pulled along as a colt.

"Let's try coaxing him," Marcia said. "We'll get some cookies."

Sandy ate the cookies with evident enjoyment and then flattened out on his stomach again.

"Oh! Come on, Sandy!" Tommie shouted in exasperation. "Please play."

But Sandy wouldn't budge.

"Look at him with his cross old face planted on his paws," said Buster.

"It looks like a shredded wheat biscuit," Marcia answered. "I'd like to whack him."

"It wouldn't do any good," Kenneth told her. "He'd only get more sulky. I'll tell you what. He can be a riding horse and gallop alongside." And Sandy, untied, galloped along with a wagging tail and flopping ears.

That day rolled by on golden wheels for the children. Before they knew it it was time for lunch, and then so very soon after it was time for the little cousins to go home and for Colin to have his supper and get ready for bed.

"We'll drive him again to-morrow," they agreed.

Rex heard, and his faithful doggie heart sank. This was awful! Generally the children were tired of a game after playing it one day, and Rex had long since made up his mind that he would stand anything for one day. But to be a horse two days, to wear that dreadful harness and to drag the children about in a squeaking rumbling cart, he just wouldn't! that was all. Sandy and Pat didn't have to do it, Sandy didn't even have to be a colt and be tied alongside. Rex lay down on the front lawn, his head on his paws, and tried to think. He



## The Rebellion of Rex

was too tired even to walk around to the kitchen to ask Cook for a bone. He just wanted to rest and hope that his duties as a horse were over. He lay full length on the grass and looked steadily ahead. Suddenly the front door opened. It was Colin.

"Here, Rex," he said. "Here is a great big bone, a fine, juicy lamb bone, and Cook has a bowl of bread and milk for you. Come on, Rex, good doggie."

Rex got to his feet.

"Come on," Colin coaxed, and Rex followed him to the kitchen where a good supper of bread and milk waited him in his bowl in the corner. Rex lapped it up hungrily while Colin stood by holding the bone. "Here's the rest," said Colin, holding it out. Rex took it gently and Colin stooped to put his arms about the dear soft neck. "You're a good kind doggie," he whispered, "and I'll give you a big bone every day." Rex wagged his tail and with the bone in his mouth went out under the trees in the garden to gnaw on it and growl over it to his heart's content.

The big lawns were silvery in the moonlight, and owls hooted from near-by woods. Crickets chirped, and little night things sang scratchy songs to each other. The children were all in their beds and sleeping soundly when Rex decided to stop gnawing his bone and to find a safe spot where it could be buried. Rex loved bones that had been buried for a few days, and always when he had chewed all of the meat from a nice new bone he dug a little hole in the ground and planted it so that it would grow more tender. He knew a splendid place behind the greenhouse where the children's grandmother raised lovely flowers. It was a place unknown to the other dogs, and

Rex was sure to find his bones there when he was ready to dig them up. He trotted around the corner of the greenhouse and presently there was a sound of digging, and a little later with his white nose covered with brown dirt, he trotted back to the gardens to rest in the moonlight.

There Pat found him. Pat was out of breath and his tongue was hanging out.

"Where have you been?" Rex asked him. (Dogs can talk to each other quite as well as little boys and girls, and they have an advantage over little boys and girls, because they can understand human talk. But no humans can understand doggie talk.)

Pat sank in a tired heap. "Everywhere," he panted. "I started a rabbit down in the willow grove, and he ran to the woods way south. I almost had him twice, but he ducked under a fence and I had to run yelping around until I found a hole to squeeze through, and by that time he was fifty yards ahead of me."

"I should think you would be tired and sick of chasing rabbits," Rex said scornfully. "You have never caught one."

"I can always hope to catch one anyway," panted Pat.

"It seems a silly way for a dog to spend his time," Rex went on with his great dignified nose in the air.

"It would be a silly way for you to spend your time, but it isn't for me, because I am a rabbit dog," Pat said.

"I had not thought of that," Rex answered thoughtfully. "Where's Sandy?"

"I'll call him," said Pat, and putting his nose in the air he gave a long-drawn-out howl that floated across the lawns and meadows like the howl of a wolf. "S-a-a-a-a-annn-dy," he yowled.

Off in the distance they heard an answering howl and in a minute it sounded nearer.

"He's coming," said Pat, "and I think he has something in his mouth; it sounds kind of full."

It was. Sandy, the naughty, had been robbing ice-boxes. The first one had only cold corn on the cob, some butter, a saucer of cold potatoes, and a bottle of olives in it. "Scarcely worth scratching open," Sandy said. But the second had a great juicy roast of beef, and except for a few little bites out of it (Sandy was so hungry he just couldn't resist those), he had brought it straight to his friends.

"You shouldn't steal, Sandy," Rex protested.

"Oh! Bah!" said Pat. "Don't preach. We are only dogs; pitch in and enjoy the roast," and good old Rex, now as bad as the robber-Sandy, pitched in and enjoyed his share.

The feast was over and the dogs talked about the children.

"They are dears," Rex said, "and I love to play with them."

"You had plenty of that to-day," Pat assured him. "I thought they overdid the horse idea a little."

"I was tired," admitted Rex.

"The greater goose you," Sandy told him. "Why do you do it? You don't have to."

"Well, what can I do?" Rex wanted to know. "I can't growl at them. That would frighten them and I wouldn't do that for worlds. I can't bite them when they are in my care; anyway, I love them too much."

"Simply don't play," advised Sandy. "Do as I do. Flatten out on your stomach and don't move."

"Yes, and then they sit all over me," Rex told him.

"Are we going to be horses and colts and galloping things to-morrow?" Pat wanted to know.



"I heard them say so," Rex answered gloomily.

"Well, I won't!" Sandy announced. "If they begin at me again in the morning I'll growl terribly at them."

"And if you do, I'll shake you until your collar falls off," Rex answered. "That is one thing that will never be done to my children."

"I really didn't mean it," Sandy apologized.

"Better not," Rex advised.

"It was no fun for me to be tied to a cart and play I was a foolish colt," Pat said. "But it must have been awful for you, Rex. Of course you are three times as big as I am, but pulling those children all over town in a cart was not so easy. All morning, and all afternoon! Wow! I thought my paws would drop off."

"They'll begin early in the morning," Rex sighed.

"It serves you right for being such a success," Sandy said a little crossly.

"It didn't hurt me for one day," Rex went on. "But honestly, I'd hate to play horse all day to-morrow."

"We'll hate it as much as you," Pat assured him, and the three dogs lay silent in the moonlight for a time, half dozing in sleepy content. A sudden yelp from Pat roused them.

"What is the matter?" Sandy asked.

But Pat couldn't answer. He rolled over and over in the grass, and barked little short joyous barks. He licked his chops and wagged his tail, and finally stood up and bounced straight up and down.

"You seem awfully pleased over something," Rex said. "What is it?"

"A grand idea," Pat said. "I have thought it all out and this is what we are going to do. If the children begin playing

horse right after breakfast we'll be good and play, and we'll be anything they want, from zebras to camels." (Pat had once crawled under a circus tent and had learned quite a lot about strange animals before he was thrown out.) "I'll trot on one side of the cart and Sandy will trot on the other. Yes, you WILL, Sandy," he said emphatically; for Sandy had made a growlish sort of noise down in his throat. "And Rex can be a horse and work like three horses, UNTIL noon. We won't lie down and be stubborn once. But after lunch, if the children begin all over again, Rex is going to rebel."

"How?" Rex asked. He was interested.

"You are going to go mad."

"Am I? How?" Rex asked again.

"Well," said Pat, "I've thought it all out." And he moved nearer. Sandy crawled up and lay with his nose close to Pat's. Rex moved closer and the whispering went on and on. Once in a while one of the dogs would wag his tail thumpishly on the ground, and twice Rex put his paws over his mouth so that his happy yelps could not be heard. The moon went down, and the night birds rocked themselves to sleep in their nests before Pat finished telling his wonderful plan.

Rex stood up. "I'm going to crawl under the porch to get some sleep," he said. "You dogs had better get some too. You'll be up with the children in the morning, then?"

"Yes," they both barked and raced away.

The children *did* begin very early in the morning. Colin had not finished his breakfast when the first "coo-oo coo-ee" was heard outside. It was Kenneth and Buster, with Sandy between them with a strap tied to his collar.

"We are going to play horse again, aren't we?" they



shouted when Colin appeared at the door. "Sandy is so good." And Kenneth added, "I don't know what is the matter with him, but he minds as soon as we speak to him, and he didn't lag behind a bit when we pulled him with the strap."

"Perhaps he'll be a colt," Colin suggested. (Sandy's nose twitched.) "Anyway, we'll try him."

"Where is the harness?" Kenneth cried. "Oh! Goodie! Here come the rest," and the four cousins raced up.

Then began a day of greatest pleasure for the children and greatest exhaustion for the dogs. Rex was still a horse, but should have been two horses, for the load he was made to pull was a heavy one. The children all piled into the cart and Rex trudged up and down hills, around the lawns, and back and forth from one cousin's home to another, until he was so tired it seemed as if he could not drag one paw after the other.

Sandy tied to one side of the cart and Pat to the other hung out their tongues and panted. But they did not flatten out and act stubborn. They trotted on willingly wherever Rex led.

At noon the children unharnessed the dogs.

"Haven't they been good doggies?" Marcia said. "And because they are so good, we'll play with them the whole afternoon. Let's hurry with our dinners; this is such a wonderful game."

"Well, they won't play with us this afternoon," growled Sandy when the children had disappeared into the house. "Rex, if they put that harness on you again, you've got to go mad."

"I will," promised Rex. "I couldn't drag an acorn shell if I was harnessed to it now. I'm all in."

"Those dreadful cart wheels scraped me a dozen times. My sides and hips are all sore," Pat went on. "It's time we fright-

ened those children. As long as we are good and patient they will go on imposing upon us. For three hours we have pattered around the streets, looking no end silly and feeling sillier. Well, now it's over. I'm through!"

"It is!" said Pat and Rex together. "So are we."

Right after dinner the children raced out. "Get the harness," they shouted happily to one another. "We'll play all the afternoon."

Pat backed away and sat down. Sandy followed suit, and they both watched with interested eyes while the children got the straps.

"We'll drive first to the candy store and then home and then down to your house, Marcia," Colin said. "And after that we'll let our horse trot up and down the street with us."

The children all got into the cart.

"Go on, Rex," they cried. Rex didn't move.

"Nice doggie, go on and run," cried Tommie who was driving.

Rex didn't move.

"Hit him with the switch," Kenneth suggested.

Tommie used the switch, and still Rex didn't move. Tommie used it again and this time harder, and then something happened.

Rex gave a great leap into the air that upset the cart and spilled the children in all directions. He stood for a minute with his four legs planted far apart and then gave another leap.

"Woof!" he barked. "Woof! Woof!"

"Oh!" screamed Marcia, "he's going mad. RUN!"

"Woof!" barked Rex again, and whirled in a circle with the cart pounding after. He stopped to put his nose to the





“ We’ll drive first to the candy store ”

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grass and whine piteously. Another leap and he flattened out on the ground with his paws over his ears. Off came the halter. He raised his nose and howled long and dismally.

The frightened children raced to the porch.

Then quite suddenly Rex began to bark. Short terrible barks. This kept up for some time and as suddenly he stopped and bounced up and down in one spot, jerking the cart up and down after him. Thud! thud! went Rex, and thud! thud! went the cart. The front wheels came off and Rex began going around in great boundy circles. His big white tail swung 'round and 'round, his long ears flapped up and down, his paws went paddy! paddy! on the cement walk and always he whined a sort of singsong whine.

Pat and Sandy backed up another foot or two and sat down with their eyes glued on the whirling Rex.

"He's gone quite mad, and we are to blame," Colin sobbed. "Someone get Grandmother quick." But not one of the fascinated children moved.

And then Rex stood still. Pat approached him with uncertain steps. "Gr-r-r-r-r," growled Rex and snapped. Pat fell back over Sandy who was following, and both dogs backed up and sat down again.

Another long howl from Rex, and then began the most astonishing performance the children had ever seen. Rex put his head on the ground and stood on it, both hind legs in the air. For just a second he balanced and then went over all the way, the wheels of the broken cart whacking after. One jump in the air and again he started the fancy circles, 'round and 'round and 'round, leaping, jumping, and howling, a confusion of frothy muzzle and swinging tail, waving paws and cart wheels.



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The tugs broke and the wheels rolled away.

"Yip! yip! yip!" wailed Rex. Another frantic series of stiff-legged jumps and he dashed for the porch and disappeared under it.

Sandy stood on his four feet. "Yow! Yow! Yow!" he howled.

Pat jumped into the air. "Gr-r-r-ow!" he barked.

"They've gone mad too," screamed the children.

A long-drawn-out howl came from under the porch, and Pat and Sandy dashed down the lawn with terrified leaps and shot over the bank beyond.

The crying, frightened children rushed into the house. "Grandmother!" they screamed. "Rex has gone mad! and so has Pat and so has Sandy!" And in a confusion of tears and muffled words they told her what had happened. "And now he is under the porch probably dying, and it's all our fault."

Grandmother soothed her frightened flock. "I'll go out and look under the porch. You all stay here," she said.

Quite calmly she approached the stone arch of the porch. "Rex, you scamp, are you there?" she called. A thudding tail on the ground told her he was. "Come out, you rascal," she said, and a white muzzle appeared and a long red tongue licked her hand.

"Did you get a little too much attention from the children, Old Dog?" the children's grandmother went on. "I don't blame you for going mad. But you frightened them terribly." She pulled his ear gently and he wagged a shamed tail. "I wondered how long you would stand being a horse, and I wondered too how you would end it. It never occurred to me you would go mad."





Rex whined softly and licked her hand again.

“And I’ll wager you put Sandy and Pat up to it, too. Poor old doggie, they about used you up, didn’t they?” and again the red tongue licked her hand gently.

“You stay under the porch and get a good rest,” the dear understanding grandmother went on, “and to-morrow I’ll promise you the children won’t drive you.” And with peace in his doggie heart, Rex crawled back to his hole in the nice cool earth and went to sleep.

At six o’clock that evening an uncertain little group of children approached the porch. In each little hand was a gift, a peace offering, and in each little mind was a doubt as to the



reception of the gift, and in each little heart was a qualm of fear.

“You call him, Colin,” said Kenneth. “You live here and he knows you best.”

“Why, you’ve always lived here and I’m only just visiting. He knows you heaps better. You call him,” Colin protested.

“Let’s all call,” suggested Tommie. And in wobbly little voices they all said “Here, Rex, here, Rex.”

A very placid Rex crawled from under the porch. He approached the children with a wagging tail.

“Why, he’s all right,” shouted Tommie gleefully. “He is feeling friendly and kind and everything. Here, Old Rex.”



They all crowded around to give him their gifts. From each little hand he took the present gently, licking the little fingers as he did so, and when the last sweet morsel was gone he lay down on the grass at their feet. As usual the children piled over him, sitting on his head and back, or curled up in his paws. The great tail thumped gently on the ground.

"We'll never treat him that way again, will we?" Cara asked, and the rest answered:

"No, we never will."

The lovely summer twilight had deepened into night before the children went home. They were so happy with Rex and so relieved after their fright, that Grandmother had not the heart to send them off. But when the really dark came, she told Huldah to see that they reached their homes safely, and they trudged away quiet and contented.

And later that night when the garden lay bathed in silvery moonlight, three jubilant dogs met by the greenhouse.

"It was grand, Rex," Pat said. "I almost thought you were mad."

"I got awfully enthusiastic over it," explained Rex.

"When you began going around in circles the children were simply pale with fright," Sandy went on. "I was watching them."

"It was too bad to frighten them so," Rex said regretfully, "but it was the only way."

"I think it was," Pat agreed.

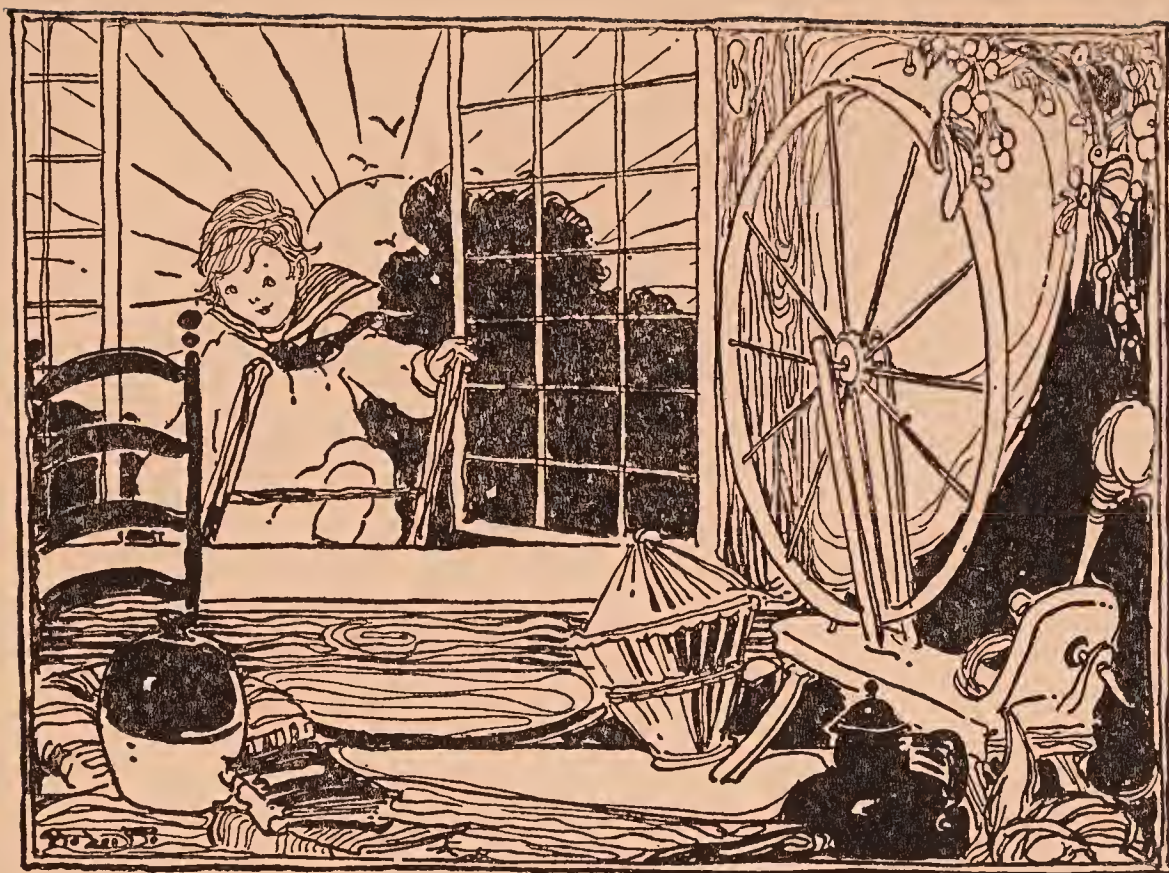
"And I know it was," Sandy finished.

And the three dogs lay in the quiet garden with their muzzles on their paws, their eyes twinkling like little stars in the moonlight.

## THE PUDDLE PATH







## THE PUDDLE PATH

**B**USTER found it, the puddle first and then the path, 'way off in a field where the children rarely played.

The children never knew who made the path and talked it over in the secrecy of the willow grove. There were no animals in that field, and as Buster said, the dogs never went the same way long enough to make any kind of a path.

"Perhaps the fairies made it," Cara suggested.

"They couldn't," Buster told her. "Fairies never walk, they fly."

"But they dance," protested Cara.

"Only in rings, and then you can scarcely see where their feet have been, they are so light," answered Buster.

## The Puddle Path

"Elves walk harder," said Marcia, "and so do Hobgoblins. They tread and stamp."

"Perhaps they made it," Tommie offered.

"Of course it was made by some sort of magic," Buster went on, "because it wasn't there always and still it's there now. We'll keep it our path and not tell anyone about it; it will be our secret path."

"And our secret puddle," Marcia said.

"What will we do with our path?" Tommie wanted to know.

"We'll use it to get to the puddle of course, silly," said Buster.

"Well, what will we do with our puddle?" Tommie went on.

"Tommie, you are just too silly," Kenneth said. "There are a million things to be done with a puddle."

"And AT a puddle, and ON a puddle and AROUND a puddle and everything about a puddle," Marcia finished. "I have an idea right now, and a good one."

"Tell us," the rest begged, but Marcia only shook her head and looked mysterious.

"You'll have to tell us if it is about the puddle or path, because they belong to all of us," Colin told her.

"I will when it gets to them," Marcia said, "but right now I'm only going to tell Kenneth, 'cause he's the oldest and 'cause I need help."

"When can we know?" Tommie asked.

"When it's finished," Marcia answered.

"When will that be?" Colin wanted to know.

"This afternoon," Marcia said.

Right after dinner the children gathered in the willow grove. Marcia and Kenneth were locked in the tool house. They had hung a towel over the window so that the rest could



not peek in, and tantalizing sounds of hammering and sawing came from the inside. Teasing did not get the towel away from the window, and begging did not open the door; and finally the discouraged children sauntered to the willow grove, their haven when everything else failed them.

"They are pounding and pounding. I could hear them, and once Marcia said, 'That's the fourth and there are only three more to make,' so there must be one for each of us, because there are seven of us," Buster said.

"I wanted to get in awfully and teased and teased and they wouldn't even answer me. It made me awfully cross," Colin said.

"We won't be cross about it though, you know," Buster answered. "It is nice of them to be making surprises for us and they have a right to be locked up, because they thought of it."

"Kenneth didn't," Colin said.

"Marcia needed him, and oh! let's not get cross over a little thing like being locked out. We're often locked out of places."

"Jam closets," suggested Tommie.

"Always," Buster agreed briefly.

"That makes me think, I brought my dessert to share," said Elizabeth Anne. "It'll have to be broken to go 'round." She fished in her pocket. "I guess it is already a little broken," and she pulled out her hand with white and sticky stuff on it.

"What was it?" Cara asked.

"It was kisses and it was good. It is still good, but it doesn't look the same as it did when it came on the table. It was round then, as large as a plate and had whipped cream with it."

"Looks don't matter much," Tommie said. "Shake out your pocket on a paper and we'll divide." And Elizabeth



## The Puddle Path

Anne shook out her pinafore pocket on a paper and the children brushed the sweet crumbs in equal little piles, not forgetting Marcia and Kenneth.

"I would have had more, but Katy came in at just the wrong time," Elizabeth Anne went on.

"It was nice of you to try, anyway," Tommie said, his mouth full of the sticky sweet.

"They must be through," said Buster suddenly. "I heard the squeak to the tool house door. It always squeaks when it is swung. They're coming. Coo-oo, coo-ee!" he called.

Marcia and Kenneth came running down the path. Their hands were empty, but they were smiling "Secret smiles," as Cara called them.

"Where's the surprise?" Buster asked.

"At the tool house; we couldn't bring them all," Marcia said.

"Here, eat your share and we'll go," said Elizabeth Anne, and without asking what it was, Marcia and Kenneth began on the little piles of sweet stuff and munched until they were gone.

"That was good; thanks!" Kenneth said as he stood up. "Come on, the surprise is ready."

They all trooped to the tool house and there in a proper little line in front of the door, like seven little soldiers, stood seven little sailboats. Maybe a real sailor would have laughed at those boats. Flat they were, with clothes-pins nailed to their bows, and centerboards of odd bits of iron. But the masts were very straight and on each was a white sail, all set and ready for a race. The children were delighted.

"They are all alike, so you can just grab," Marcia said, "and then we will sail them."



Finally all of the boats were launched



## The Puddle Path

“Why, the sails are all sewed and everything,” Cara cried. “When did you do that, Marcia?”

“Mother did them for me this noon. That was why she would not let you in the sewing-room. We wanted it to be a really-truly surprise,” Marcia said. “And now we are going to sail them and have races. We’ll go to the puddle by the magic path.” And she started off, followed by the others.

The path did look like a magic path. Tall grasses grew on each side of it, and from a distance of ten feet it could not be seen.

“It looks just like the rest of the landscape,” said Kenneth who had just learned the word and was pleased with a chance to use it.

“We must be quiet every time we go down it,” Buster said. “It may really belong to the Elves and Hobgoblins and they won’t want it spoiled when they come out at night to use it. They won’t care if we use it during the day, but we mustn’t make it wider and we mustn’t be noisy on it.” So they tiptoed along without a word.

But when the puddle was reached they forgot all about being quiet. The boats were launched with all the noise of a shipyard and the children danced on the edge of the puddle and shouted instructions at the tops of their voices. Finally all of the boats were launched and sailing proudly across the water, their white sails all puffed out with wind and their funny little shapes making straggling wakes in the water behind them.

“It makes the puddle seem bigger to have the boats making such a fuss about getting across it,” said Kenneth, who was racing around the pond to send his boat out whenever it neared land. “Let’s not call it a puddle. That sounds so muddy and small.”

“We could call it a pond,” suggested Buster.

“Or a lake. I know; let’s name it after Grandmother. We can use the first part of her name and call it ‘Grand Lake.’”

“That’s fine!” agreed the others.

All that afternoon and the next day the children played with their boats. It was queer the way one boat would win the first race and another would win the second. It made the races much more exciting than they would have been if the same boat had come out ahead every time. The children were ever so grateful to Marcia and Kenneth and thought it very clever of them to have made the boats all alike; and they thought they would never tire of the wonderful new game.

But the third day something happened. The children had gone down the secret path quietly as usual, and as usual had broken into noisy shouts when the edge of the water was reached. The boats had sailed slowly to the middle of the pond and there they had stopped. Not a breath of wind to blow them back or across, and there they stayed like little ducks in a group and the children could not reach them.

“If we had a long pole, or something,” Marcia said.

“I’ll get my fishing pole,” Tommie offered. He was gone quite a while, but the boats were still in an annoying, little, out-of-reach group when he returned with his pole. It was a long pole, but not long enough to reach the center of the puddle.

“It’s just too maddening,” Marcia sputtered. “If we only had a big boat.”

Kenneth turned and looked at her quite steadily and thoughtfully. “Oh, Marcia!” he said, “what a beautiful idea.”

The glory of it suddenly struck Marcia. “With oars,” she



went on, and as the wonderful idea began to take hold of the others, they broke into delighted smiles.

"Of course we could never make one that would not leak, and if Grand Lake is very deep we'd sink and drown," Tommie said.

"And how could we make oars? They have to be shaped and fitted in holes in the boat, don't they?" Colin asked.

"No," Kenneth told him. "We could bore holes in the oars and run a long nail through them and into the edges of the boat." Suddenly he lay on his back and kicked his heels in the air. "Oh!" he cried joyfully. "What a beau-oo-oo-ootiful idea!"

"Perhaps we'd better not tell," suggested Colin.

"Certainly not," Kenneth answered him. "We never tell our secrets to anyone until they are over and no longer secrets."

"And even then we don't always tell," Colin said truthfully.

"Sometimes it's better not," Marcia said as if to excuse them all for not telling, and then realizing that it was not quite a proper excuse, she added, "There is really so little use bothering the Grown-ups with our affairs."

Tommie's pockets were bulging when he arrived at the shop the next morning. He emptied big and little nails all over the floor and grinned cheerfully when the children exclaimed over them. Kenneth came with almost as many, and when Colin added his collection there were nails enough to build a battleship.

"Did anybody say anything?" Kenneth wanted to know.

"Grandmother asked me what we were up to and I said, 'Building something,' and then she said, 'Well, see to it that you do not unbuild anything.' I suppose she meant destroy, and I told her we wouldn't," Colin answered.

"She'll be surprised when she sees what we have made," said Tommie.

Cara, who was helping Tommie sort the nails, straightened up. "Is this going to be anything like the paint surprise?" she asked. "'Cause if it is, I'm not going to help. My stomach ached all night from crying that time, and anyway I don't want to see that hurt look on Grandmother's face again."

"Cara!" cried Kenneth, "we put that day with the castor oil and spankings; we said we'd never mention it again."

"I know that," Cara went on stoutly, "but just the samey I want to know. If this is going to be anything Roy can tattle about, or that Huldah can keep on talking about whenever she gets a little mad at us, I'd rather not play it."

"Cara is right," said Colin. "But this isn't mischief because we aren't going to spoil anything. We are just going to make something out of old boards and such, and I know it's all right and nobody will care. Let's get at it. We'll have to hurry, because the pond might dry up or the cows might be put in the field and drink it up, and we want our boat while the water is deep."

And so the big boat was begun. The children made the floor first.

"So we can have something to nail the sides to," explained Kenneth. They used long boards with smaller ones nailed across at both ends and in the middle.

"It looks like our storm house door," Cara said, "the one they put up to keep the snow from blowing in."

"It won't when we've shaped it," Kenneth told her; and soon after that he drew two curved lines at one end, bringing them to a point, and when he had made them very black with

the pencil he began to saw. When he had finished, the floor looked very like a boat.

"It will simply cut through the water," cried Colin joyfully. "If we only had an engine."

"Nonsense. It would only get started and have to stop; the pond is too small," Buster said.

The floor seemed perfect and to the eager children the boat was almost finished, but the work came to a full stop when they tried to make the sides. They could not curve the long boards to fit, and when they tried nailing small boards up and down great holes appeared and would not improve with patching.

"We might as well put to sea in the sink strainer," said Marcia.

"Like the Owl and the Pussy-cat," said Cara.

"They would know better than to start out in THIS," Kenneth remarked in a disgusted voice. "Whatever is the matter with the leaky thing? I thought boats were easier to make. How do men make them fit together anyway?"

"We might ask Roy," Tommie suggested, and then blushed under the scornful looks of his playmates.

"Let's not give up," Buster went on. And for two days the children kept pluckily at it, but at the end of that time Kenneth threw down his hammer in despair.

"We never can, that's all!" he cried. "Every time we nail another board it makes a new hole. Even if we did finish this old boat and got it floating, it would sink and we'd all be drowned if we got in it. That is just what would happen," he continued dismally. "We'd all be drowned."

"And that would not be very pleasant or cozy, would it?" asked Elizabeth Anne brightly.



"Hardly," Kenneth said briefly.

"Does it mean that we will never go sailing on Grand Lake?" Tommie asked.

"Let's go to the grove and talk it over," suggested Colin. "I'm sick of this old workshop anyway, and I want to pick the slivers out of my hands."

A rather gloomy procession filed its way to the willow grove and once there the children sank into discouraged silence. Finally Marcia spoke.

"It seems a pity to give up the idea of going sailing just because we haven't the tools to make a boat." She hated to admit that they did not know how to build a boat and felt a certain satisfaction in blaming the tools in the workshop.

"We are not going to give it up," Kenneth said positively, and then thought a long time while the children waited for him to go on. "I have it!" he cried joyfully. "Just the thing."

"Oh! what is it?" the others wanted to know.

"A wash tub," Kenneth said. "To-day is Thursday; they won't need it in the laundry until Monday and we can sail four days without making any trouble."

"But it won't hold us all," Marcia said.

"I have another idea," Buster went on. "Let's get one of those doors up-stairs in the shed. They are heavy and should hold at least five of us, and the other two can sail the tub. The door will never be missed, because it will never be used again. Roy said those doors were old doors and it was a pity they were going to waste, they were such good lumber, and this way they won't be going to waste."

"Grandmother likes to have us use our old things, too. She



said so when I wore an old suit the other day," went on Tommie. "And once I heard her tell Cara she was glad to see her play with her old dolls and not put them away for the new ones."

And with this very good reasoning the children left the willow grove to find the wash tub and the door.

The tub was easy to carry. Once out of the cellar and out of sight of Huldah, it could be rolled along like a hoop, but the door presented difficulties. It was very heavy indeed and very large.

"It must have been used in a castle," said Marcia looking down at it. "It is so very big."

"Or perhaps a jail," said Cara. "They need strong ones in jails, don't they?"

"We can never drag it down the ladder," Kenneth said. "I wonder where Roy is."

"Why?" asked Colin.

"I thought if he wasn't here to worry about us lifting things too heavy, we could tie a rope to it and let it out of the window."

"Wait a minute," said Tommie and disappeared down the ladder. He returned in a minute. "Roy and Henry have both gone off with the horses," he panted. "We'd better hurry."

The door was dragged to the window, where the children tied a rope to the handle and prepared to push it out. They slid it in on edge, and were ready to push it out when Tommie said:

"Let's put the rope over a beam, and then we won't all be yanked out after it. That's the way men lift heavy things and let them down."

So the rope was thrown over a beam and Tommie and Cara and Elizabeth Anne took the end of it.

“ They are heavier than the door and the rest of us will have to get it started. Now when I count three, you all help me shove,” and he counted “ One! two! three! ”

Out went the door! up went the rope! and up shot Cara and Tommie and Elizabeth Anne.

“ Ouch! ” shrieked Tommie as his head banged the beam.

“ Oh! ” wailed Elizabeth Anne and she fell in a heap on the floor; and “ Oh! ” screamed Cara as she landed smack on Elizabeth Anne, and the three of them began to cry forlornly.

“ You aren’t hurt,” Kenneth said scornfully. “ It’s the door we’d better worry about. I’ll bet it is broken to smithereens. Come on; hurry! ” and he half climbed and half fell down the ladder with the rest rolling after.

The door was not much broken, just a corner split off and the knob gone.

“ It’s more like a boat that way. We’ll have to drag it with a rope,” said Buster.

It was a long, hard pull to the pond and the puddle path was wider by several feet when the door was finally dragged to the shore and launched. The children found long poles to push themselves about, although oars would have been much more like real boats.

“ Indians used poles,” said Buster, and they were all perfectly satisfied.

Cara and Tommie were the first off in the tub. “ Cara is the lightest of the girls and Tommie is the lightest of the boys, so they can sail in the tub,” said Kenneth, and pushed them off, Tommie poling importantly to the middle of the pond.

"Oh, Cara, aren't you scared?" Marcia cried; and Cara's tone was very brave as she answered:

"Not a bit. Come on, it's great fun."

Launching the door was not so easy, and twice Kenneth's feet slipped on the edge of the pond and went in the water over his boots.

"You'll be a sight when this is done," said Marcia.

"I am now," Kenneth grinned. "We can't expect to put to sea and stay dry."

"Hi! she's off! Jump, Ken!" cried Buster who was prancing about excitedly on the other end of the door, and Kenneth jumped, landed hard on the end toward shore, and sunk it under water a few inches.

"Here you! What are you doing? My feet are soaking wet," cried Marcia.

"Are you a sailor or a baby?" asked Kenneth scornfully.

"A sailor," answered Marcia, a little subdued.

"Then don't growl about wet feet," Kenneth told her.

The door made a splendid raft as long as they all stayed in the middle, but it was hard to pole unless one stood on the edge. Buster tried to pole from the center.

"Here! give me that pole," said Kenneth. "I'm not afraid to stand on the edge." He took the pole, jabbed it in the muddy bottom of the water and gave a violent shove. No one was expecting it. Marcia took a few hurried steps, like a little dance, and banged into Elizabeth Anne, who gave her an angry push and sent her flying back to the other side of the raft.

"What is the matter with you?" demanded Buster. "That's no way to act; you're rocking the boat. You'll have us all in the water, first thing you know."

"I couldn't help it," cried Marcia. "Kenneth 'most shoved



the raft out from under me, and Elizabeth Anne 'most shoved me off the raft."

"You stepped on my foot," said Elizabeth Anne, "and it hurt."

Kenneth turned his attention once more to the poling. He pushed the end deep in the mud and gave another great push. Bang! went the raft into the tub, which rocked perilously.

"Oh! we're tipping over!" screamed Cara as she lurched into Tommie and caught his arms.

"Leggo!" howled Tommie. "Do you want to pull me overboard and drown me dead?"

He tried to get away from Cara, but she only clung tighter.

Tommie gave a final wrench. "You can fall in if you want to, but you needn't pull me," he cried. "Leggo!"

Cara did let go, but only to grab the side of the tub with both hands.

"Leggo of that, too!" Tommie shouted. "You're all on one side; get in the middle."

"I won't!" Cara cried. "I have just as much right in this tub as you have. You think I have to do everything you say."

"I'll show you," threatened Tommie and caught her hands to loosen her hold on the side of the tub. His weight on one side, added to Cara's, was too much. The tub gave a final lurch and rolled over completely.

There was a terrified scream from everyone on the raft, an agonized wait, and Tommie's head appeared above the water to be followed by Cara's. At least the others supposed it was Tommie and Cara, but the muddy, dripping little things looked more like water-soaked posts in an old dock.

"Oh! Tommie, is it that deep?" cried Kenneth.

"Deep nothing! We're sitting down in it, and it's all your



fault we're in. You jabbed that old door into us on purpose and now look at us," raged Tommie.

"You're a mean old thing," cried Cara, "and I'd just like to see you fall in, too." She raised her hands to wipe her face. They were covered with mud, and suddenly furious with Kenneth for the plight she was in, she threw a handful of mud at him with all of her angry strength. Plop! It hit him square in the face. He swung the pole at her, missed her by several inches and hit Tommie an irritating blow on the shoulder; a bit of friendliness which Tommie promptly returned with a second handful of mud. His aim was not as good as Cara's and the squeegey mess closed both of Buster's eyes.

"Quit that!" he howled. "I didn't do anything to you. Gimme that pole, Kenneth. I'll show him."

He jumped across the raft to take the pole, but one foot struck the slippery mud, the other went into the air and off he shot into the water. He caught the first thing handy to save himself. It happened to be Kenneth's leg. There was an instant's pause and in he went, taking the leg right along with him.

An angry Kenneth came to the top, quite as unrecognizable as the guilty Buster who appeared with him. Kenneth, gasping for breath, filled his hands with mud to throw at Buster, when a shout of derision from Tommie directed his attention to that offender. He flung himself at Tommie and ducked him under the now perfectly black water.

"Yee!" shouted Marcia joyfully. "They are all in; we might as well go, too. Come on, Elizabeth Anne," and they hopped wickedly into the muddy mess.

For five minutes the mud simply flew. The children forgot their quick anger at one another in the charm of this naughty

new play. They romped in and out of the pond, throwing great gobs of mud at each other and pushing each other under the inky water. At first their guilty laughter was subdued and occasional, but as the battle waged and they became more and more unrecognizable, their shouts grew louder and louder, until finally shriek after shriek rang out and the pond was a perfect bedlam of noise and action.

Roy and Henry, returning with the horses, heard the racket.

"It's them young'uns ag'in," said Roy. "Leave us see what they're up to." And they started off in the direction of the pond.

The children, completely absorbed in the joys of the mud battle, did not hear or see the two men until they stood at the end of the puddle path by the pond, when suddenly Buster caught sight of them. His hand, filled with mud to throw at Marcia, dropped at his side, his mouth opened in guilty astonishment and he stood rooted to the spot. The others followed his gaze and silence fell as they stared guiltily at the two men, and the two men stared with astonishment at them.

"Where'd you git that door?" Roy demanded.

"In the shed," answered Buster.

"How'd you git it here?"

"We dragged it," said Kenneth.

Roy turned to Henry. "If we made children work as hard as that the law'd git after us," he stated.

"Sure," Henry answered briefly.

They looked at the mud-caked figures one after the other and suddenly they began to laugh. Silently at first, with heaving shoulders, then louder and louder, until finally they sank to the ground and rocked with laughter. Roy choked and caught his breath and Henry made sounds like a cackling hen.

They held their sides and gasped for breath, and shouted and pounded each other on the shoulders.

The children resented this.

"I hate being laughed at," Kenneth said. He tried to draw himself up and look dignified, but somehow felt that dignity was a failure when clothed in mud. His loftiness brought renewed shouts from Henry and Roy.

"They are very silly," said Marcia in a grown-up way. "I'm going. I won't stay here to be laughed at."

She started off, followed by the rest, and as they marched up the Puddle Path they could hear the noisy Roy and Henry still guffawing on the edge of the pond.

Grandmother was in the garden gathering roses when the muddy and dripping little band trudged up the road. She saw them before they saw her and stepped around the hedge to meet them as they turned into the yard.

"Well!" she gasped.

They stood before her, guilty and silent, their faces streaked with mud and the corners of their mouths turned down. Grandmother looked at them as Roy and Henry had done, and then, as they had done, she began to laugh. At first little ripples of mirth came from her lips, and then they grew into something that sounded like giggles,—the kind of giggles that should not come, but that just won't be held back. Suddenly she dropped her roses and put her hands over her face, trying to smother the merry little chuckles that simply would not be smothered; and at last she gave up and peal after peal of laughter sounded in the garden.

The children stood in a row and wondered whether to laugh with Grandmother or not. A wild little giggle came from Elizabeth Anne and then Marcia gave a sudden little shout.



That was enough. One by one the children joined Grandmother in her merriment and as they looked at each other their joy got more and more uncontrolled, until they simply could not hold in another minute, but whooped and shouted and jumped up and down and held their sides with glee.

"Oh!" cried Grandmother. "What dreadful dears you are. I'd like to hug you all, but I'd hate to look as you do. You'll have to hurry home, all of you, and get cleaned up for supper. Run into the house, Colin, and get bathed and have clean clothes on, and the rest of you run away home . . . hurry!" And as they scampered off they could hear her little bursts of laughter.

The next morning they met in the willow grove as they always did to plan for the day.

"What did your mother say?" Colin asked Marcia.

"Why nothing. I was so surprised. She was talking to Grandmother over the 'phone when we came in and she didn't even look astonished. We were pretty muddy too," Marcia answered.

"That's queer," said Kenneth. "My mother was talking over the 'phone to Grandmother too, and she never scolded a word."

"Mine didn't," put in Tommie, and Buster finished, "Elizabeth Anne and I weren't scolded. Funny, wasn't it? I expected it, too, about my clothes, even though they were my play clothes."

"It was great fun, anyway," Colin went on. "Let's go down the Puddle Path and see how things look."

But things looked strange when they got to the edge of the pond. The door was gone and the tub as well. The little



## The Puddle Path

boats were in a row on the bank and Roy was busily digging a ditch and the pond looked astonishingly shallow.

“Roy!” they cried together. “What EVER are you doing to our puddle? You’re spoiling it with that ditch. ALL of the water is running out.”

“Orders is orders,” said Roy, “and I got mine this morning to drain this here puddle.”















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